

THE CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A process for preparing a hypocholesterolaemic agent which comprises:

steeping an edible fungus in a first solvent under temperature and time conditions effective to extract an active fraction in a liquid phase,

separating the liquid phase from solid materials,

obtaining a dry extract of the active fraction from the liquid phase,

forming an aqueous phase of the dry extract and water,

contacting the aqueous phase with a second solvent that has a lower polarity than the first solvent and that is immiscible with water, with the contacting conducted under conditions sufficient to extract the active fraction in an organic phase,

separating the organic phase from the aqueous phase, and

obtaining as the hypocholesterolaemic agent the active fraction recovered from the organic phase.

2. The process of claim 1 wherein the fungi are *Agaricales*, *Aphylllophorales* or *Stereales*.

3. The process of claim 1 wherein the fungi are one or more of *Pleurotus eryngii*, *Pleurotus eous*, *Ganoderma lucidum*, *Grifola frondosa*, *Pleurotus ostreatus*, *Agrocybe aegerita*, *Pholiota nameko*, *Pleurotus citrinopileatus* or *Flamulina velutipes*.

4. The process of claim 1 the steeping is carried out for 4 to 96 hours at a temperature of between 5 and 30°C.

5. The process of claim 1 wherein the dry extract is obtained by evaporating the liquid phase.

6. The process of claim 1 wherein the first solvent is methanol, ethanol, chloroform, or a mixture thereof.

7. The process of claim 1 wherein the second solvent is ethyl acetate, isopropanol, chloroform or a mixture thereof.

8. The process of claim 1 which further comprises adjusting the pH of the aqueous phase to a value of between 2 and 5 before the extraction with the second solvent.

9. The process of claim 1 wherein the contacting is carried out by repeated washings of the aqueous phase.

10. A hypocholesterolaemic agent obtainable by the process of claim 1 and being rich in oxygenated natural derivatives of lanosterol.

11. An edible composition for inhibiting synthesis of cholesterol in a person comprising a food or beverage and the hypocholesterolaemic agent of claim 11 in an effective amount therein.

12. A method for inhibiting synthesis of cholesterol which comprises administering to a person in need of such treatment the hypocholesterolaemic agent of claim 11 in an effective amount thereof.

13. A method for inhibiting synthesis of cholesterol which comprises administering to a person in need of such treatment a food or beverage containing the hypocholesterolaemic agent of claim 11 in an effective amount therein.